

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## White Earth tribe becomes Minnesota's first tribal conservation district

**White Earth, Minn., May 8, 2007**—Mark Rey, undersecretary for natural resources and environment for USDA, Washington, DC., announced today that Minnesota's first tribal conservation district has been formed at White Earth, Minnesota. "I am honored to be on Agriculture Secretary Mike Johann's team as he affirms USDA commitment to tribal government as well as USDA's goals for better serving farmers, ranchers, communities and consumers in Indian country," said Mark Rey, Undersecretary of Natural Resources for USDA.

"This is an exciting development for Minnesota," said Assistant State Conservationist, Operations, Ann English of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "We are happy to see the development of tribal districts to manage and conserve natural resources at the local level."

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has an integral role in helping people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment on private and tribal lands. NRCS has a unique partnership with conservation districts which are vital to the locally led approach to conservation that has served American landowners for seven decades.

Today USDA undersecretary Rey signed a mutual agreement with the White Earth tribe. These agreements formally recognize these tribes within USDA's statutory authorities, regulations, and policies for purposes of delivering conservation programs in cooperation with these tribes and conservation districts on tribal lands.

Since the Dust Bowl of the 1930's, NRCS has worked in partnership with local conservation districts and other agencies throughout the U.S. to help landowners, as well as Federal, State, tribal, and local governments and community groups conserve natural resources on private lands.